

HISTORY OF THE GNAT FALLS TRIP AS IT WAS MADE BY THE ANGORA HIKING CLUB

By AUGUST HILDEBRAND, Historian

Sunday, April 13th, 1924 was the day set for this trip. We were told to prepare for a rough trip—rough hiking clothes, rough hiking shoes—to be ended by foot, and means and to assemble at the corner of Eleventh and Exchange Streets at 6:00 o'clock A. M.

Promptly at this time and this place, in the grey of the morning, those who had signed up for the trip were on hand. We could number and count all told twenty members and guests with his covered truck soon had us all comfortably and comfortably seated on benches made of boards. We soon sped toward the Eastern part of the City passing Tongue Point and its base site.

The weather was not any better, but the air was rather bracing. Most of us had some rain, so no ill effects were expected.

Looking East when we passed over the hill, we saw the first time we noticed a bright sunny sky in the direction of Eastern Oregon. This gave us hope of good weather for the day.

Passing over and around the bend of Mill Creek, we were soon in the John Day farming district. The Illes of the meadows were in full bloom and some farm signs indicated brightly colored daffodils. Every one knows daffodils in their brilliant yellow; they are one of the early flowers which herald the coming of Spring. They grow easily and profusely in our climate and should be more extensively cultivated.

Illes of the meadows are known in street language as Skunk Cabbages. They are also of a bright yellow shade. Daffodils, Illes of the Meadow and Scotch Broom are the three flowers that do much to give to our landscape that touch we look up which give an early Spring effect.

While I cannot advise the cultivation of the Illes of the meadows and the cultivation of Scotch Broom, except under restrictions, let us all for get them as nuisances. They do capture the eye like Peck's Bad Boy they have their place in the scheme of things, and with all their faults, we do love to see them!

Passing over the John Day bridge we noticed a good many deep sea trolling and Columbia River fishing boats lying in harbor there. It gives the idea of a good fishing place in the placid, wind protected waters of this little tide stream. It has a small harbor effect, and certainly has beautiful motifs for kodak pictures, paintings, etc.

The farm homes situated at and upon this river and on the Highways, some on projecting knobs, as though progenitors of future stone castles and mansions, and some farther along overlooking the broad Columbia; give a dreamer a chance to vision a beautiful, enchanting country side with its splendor of nature and its beauty new with only scant efforts made by man and with the many desirable buildings still going to waste, so to speak—with Tongue Point in the background and the broad Cathlamet Bay before you—it is a beautiful picture.

Burnside Village, lying coolly on an extension of land overlooking all, should be mentioned. It is the home place of fisherman and small farmers, a neat little village.

It was soon passed, also the cross roads at Stevenson. In the distance, the Union High School No. 2 to our left. This is a neat building and speaks well for the energy and spirit of the farming communities of Stevenson and Knappa.

Passing under a logging railroad we passed over Big Creek near Knappa, at a few more turns of the road passing through the country side over Rock Creek—and just at the long, straight stretch of road, we halted. We disembarked and went straight in a Westerly direction and soon found ourselves on an abandoned logging road. Here we assembled and counted twenty members and introduced ourselves. We were twenty one all told and the following were prepared to make the trip: Charles Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Emil Granlund, Charles Hustwick, A. Rannick, August Hildebrand, Laverne Shatto, William Pise, Elmo Sain, Marshal Johnson, Miss Sue, Miss Hardy, Amel Legge, George Gammie, Mrs. Patterson, Coral Stull, R. McGavin, R. D. Ingram, Ann Mallinen and Alii Lund.

We started single file, the chief guide, Emil Granlund acting as leader, Mrs. Granlund acting as hiking chaperone, with Charles Johnson as rear guard. We were in easy stages. The weather was cool, but after about a half mile of hiking we were warmed up enough to discard our heavy over-clothing, especially as it looked as though we would have a fair day and dry. All unnecessary baggage was packed under a convenient stump, protected from possible rain.

The logging road led gradually and steadily up hill. This was good hiking as the road had been made of

coarse sand. Here and there young trees and fallen dead trees obstructed the way however, but not to any great disadvantage. Presently the guide led us to the right through a large cut and off and quickly turned over part of the hill. Here trail was somewhat more difficult and the trail was steeper. However it turned out to be a short cut so distance was saved.

On this stretch of the trail we saw the first wild mountain flowers, in pink, a small bunch out in the color and size of a butter cup, but the shape of a pansy. Oregon grape was just starting to bloom, also wild bleeding hearts, Lily of the Valley, red wild currant blossom, and of course the ever present salmon berry blossoms.

Steadily we went up hill, continuing over old logging railroad grades. The road was more rocky, and the rocks were of a porous kind, indicating volcanic origin. After traveling about two hours up we turned the road down in a gash and found ourselves in the shade of a large tree.

Up to this time we had traveled with no variation through logged off and burned over land. This land has not that charm that the green woods have. However the distant Washington hills and distant Columbia River banks compensated for the lack of other beauty.

Arriving at the bottom of the canyon in the thick underbrush of the green timber, the first sight of the creek was somewhat disappointing, a heavy windstorm last winter had felled a great many trees throwing them across the road. We were ranked as it was desirable to keep in close touch to each other while travelling through this conglomeration of underbrush and trees. We again counted numbers to assure ourselves that everyone was present and soon were traveling up-Creek. This traveling was now somewhat easier than before. While in the burnt over district there were a good many obstructions these were now multiplied many times. We were now sure that by the time we returned home we would be in shape to right rope walkers, loop-the-loop jumpers, hurdle racers, pole vaulters and log riders, and climbing the steep rocky walls of the canyon made splendid steep climbers out of us! Yes, it was some effort!

We crossed the creek and were now facing upstream on the left side where the Creek cascaded over boulders forming small waterfalls. Presently the Chief Guide announced that we had arrived at our camping place, and just ahead was the first waterfall, 125 feet high, very beautiful. We stopped at campfire and cooked our meal, and cleared the place of some underbrush. The gorge is very narrow, and while we had plenty of room, the walls of the canyon come close to the water. We lunched.

The walls on both sides of the gorge were several hundred feet high, but the meadows on the other side did not allow any view up or down. There were trees and brush all around us. The trees were a virgin forest composed of fir, spruce, cedar, with some hemlock and alder, and the undergrowth consisted of berry, Oregon grape, ferns and moss.

While we were preparing lunch to our dismay it started to darken in the sky directly above us; we had no horizontal view. A few drops of rain made us stop short. We felt gloomy and had to take to a discussion of the weather. Then someone who perhaps had attended Barnes Psychiatry class last winter started that well known familiar tune, "Hall, Hall, the Gang's all Here, What the Heck to we care etc." This seemed to have the right effect as we all felt more cheerful—and the rain and half stopped!! It was now about 12 o'clock noon.

After lunch we packed our belongings up and scaled the rocky canyon toward the second falls and in a very short time we beheld them before us; one of about the same girth as the first. The campers, photographers and others who had their kodaks along were busy all this time taking pictures. These first two falls were of about the same shape and volume of the Waukeena Falls in the Columbia River, with perhaps not quite as much water.

We went, climbing up, hanging on to salmon berry bushes, ferns, etc. and once in a while, as Dervil's walking cane bush, Dervil's walking cane is roughly named, being of the thickness of a cane, 8' to 10' tall, with large tropical leaves branching on top. The stem is covered with pointed, very sharp, prickly stickers that break and stick in the fleshy part of one's hands and fingers. You think of the devil when you are unlucky enough to grab one, even though you received your education in Sunday School.

We soon beheld Falls Number Three before us. These falls form narrower than the others. The first two were what one might call of irregular shape, but number three had a straight fall down, somewhat like a waterfall. It flows over a large rock projection and one is perfectly able, and it is entirely safe, to walk under the falls. It has also a grassy or mossy green background under the rock shelf, the white spray contrasting with the green. The height of the falls should be about 120 feet, width on top about 10 feet, and below, on account of the spray spreading about 18 feet wide.

We crossed the Creek over rocks, boulders and logs and climbed the right side of the gash which, and went to the top of the horse tail falls. Some of the bunch enjoyed rolling boulders down, timing the return of the sound of the dropping boulders. It took $\frac{3}{4}$ seconds from the drop until someone figures out if I guessed the height of the falls correctly?

While we were standing on top of these falls we beheld a little above us, Falls Number Four. These were of another shape, being about 20 feet high, so high as to be called Falls Number Three. The water here falls over in an even sheet like the mane of a horse.

This is as far as we went. Above these last falls there is supposed to be a sort of table land with another fall of about the same size as these seven miles farther up-Creek. It is claimed that this country was a great gathering place for Elk. It is called Elk Prairie, being grassy in places under the trees.

These four falls that we had explored are connected with lesser falls which cascade over the boulders. Each fall is of a different shape and has been the home of some animal. This traveling was now somewhat easier than before. While in the burnt over district there were a good many obstructions these were now multiplied many times. We were now sure that by the time we returned home we would be in shape to right rope walkers, loop-the-loop jumpers, hurdle racers, pole vaulters and log riders, and climbing the steep rocky walls of the canyon made splendid steep climbers out of us! Yes, it was some effort!

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Arriving at the bottom of the gash we had to travel up again in a stand of tall timber and soon came to a abandoned railroad grade. After some walking we soon were on trails we traveled in the morning, having completed a circle in our travels. We now passed a rock cut or quarry on the way. Some of the more active ones of our party amused themselves by climbing trees and taking down a number of coons. Previous to this one member of the party had mimicked a wild cat in its gestures and cry on one of the upturned leaning trees, to the amusement of the crowd.

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The view toward the State of Washington was beautiful. While it was somewhat cloudy, Tongue Point, Grays Bay, Cathlamet Bay, the Columbia River with the steamers plying up and down, Altona, Brookfield, Skomakawa, etc. could all be seen.

The Chief Guide sent two men, Marshal Johnson and William Pise ahead to the meeting place on the highway to take care of the coffee kettle and to start a fire. It had been decided that during the time we were to wait for the auto truck to take us to Astoria we were to take lunch. After traveling down some steep grades and taking advantage of some short cuts through the brush so as to avoid the long winding of the road, we stopped the Columbia River Highway below.

Fire had been started O. K. and was burning bright and cheerfully, but the water funder was as yet hunting for water in the jungle. Ordinarily in the Western Oregon country, obtaining water is no worry, but it seems that the party got started in the wrong direction, traveling alongside the Creek but not crossing it. The water funder was not able to see it as usual it took the "boss" to do it; after the return of the water funder with an empty kettle, it took the Chief Guide just about two minutes to find and bring back a plentiful supply.

The sun was shining and everyone was waiting for the coffee to brew, we had made the coffee to the best of our ability. It was now time to start and go west, rain clouds gathered, and to our dismay, they traveled toward us. It soon commenced to sprinkle; the North wind was somewhat cold too. We were traveling past the direction of the wind, so we were no longer in the wilderness we did not feel any too comfortable and started to huddle together and covered ourselves as best we could to protect us from the downpour of rain. All of a sudden the sun again shone brightly upon the Highway toward us. It was a welcome sight and dispelled our gloom. The side curtains were placed in position and soon the whole company lunched in the truck under cover. We did not go far. What in Heck do we care about one of our party who was picked up by the auto's a friend and was also speeded home-ward bound.

Without any hurry we finished the meal, extinguished the fire and were soon speeding toward Astoria. While the truck had side curtains on, the front on both sides of the driver's seat was open and the North wind, exhilarated by driving, was piping through these gaps. Charles Hustwick and Charles Johnson, one on each side, acted as windshields assuring the rest of us fairly comfortable riding. The driving was a good chauffeur. The rain was coming down continually, and the windings of the slippery road were negotiated in good order.

The gang was singing all the songs that were ever printed or sung, from old fashioned "Merrily We Roll Along," "Ruben, I've been a bad boy," "I'm a Ramblin' Man," the Oregon State song etc etc. It was a real singing school entertainment accompanied with orchestra.

The orchestra was furnished by Miss Patterson. She played on a sort of tin whistle which had the sound of a hoarse Scotch bag pipe. Yes, she was a noise enough, but bagpipe effect was completely disturbed by time or pleasure at other times just as she got the response out of the instrument, whether mischievous or inspiring.

We soon rounded the neck of Tongue Point and heading in a Westerly direction, soon espied Astoria. We were now drawn to a sunset on the Columbia over the mouth of Columbia which is a rather uncommon sight. Either the sunset is obscured or is in entire view. In this case the streaky dark sheets of rain alterated the red.

Sixteenth street was the first stop where several got off, and also yours truly. It was noticed in particular by a historian that everyone had a pleasant smile and was happy when he left. In spite of rain it always "sunshine" with the Angora bunch. And thus ended another perfect day.

It is my hope and wish that the owners of this land be public spirited and donate either to the County of Clatsop or to the City of Astoria for the public use and good, enough land to make a reasonable sized park. These materials, to preserve the immediate timber, that the original beauty may not be retarded and to donate over some of the abandoned logging railroads, the right of way to this bit of mountain scenery. It is suggested that in the example of Sutro Heights, Benson Park and Braden Park the names of the donors may be honored. It is also suggested that the Angora Hiking Club of Astoria, Oregon take the proper steps to acquaint the owners of this land of this.

There is also an economic question involved; I am sure that the lower part of the falls are in an altitude of 1000 feet above the lowest point of Astoria. Below the falls a dam and reservoir could be constructed to supply our city. This will in no way detract from the falls—in fact it will enhance the value and beauty. In course of time this water as well as the water of Big Creek above Knappa will be a necessity to our growing community, however has no present monetary value—it is only so, as projected and improved.

Respectfully submitted,
AUGUST HILDEBRAND,
Historian of the Angora
Hiking Club, Park Commission
of Astoria, Member
of the Kiwanis Club.